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ABSTRACT

One of the most rapidly growing innovations in education in the United States is the adoption of year-round calendars. The largest year-round operation during the 1970's and a model for many districts was run by the Jefferson County, Colorado, School District. After 14 years of year-round schooling, the district returned to a modified 9-month calendar in 1988. This document discusses the reasons for the calendar change. Factors in the decision include the following: increased demand for schools in new neighborhoods; the Board of Education view of year-round education as a temporary housing measure; administrative factors (year-round schools create more work for administrators at the building level and at the central office, the majority of the 112 schools in this district were on a 9-month schedule, etc.); the appeal of new school construction with technological advances; changing educational priorities of the county school board; failure to perceive the cost savings of year-round education; and stipulation by the board that all schools within an attendance area have the same calendar. Recommendations are made that address each of these barriers. Five tables are included. (LMI)

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

Why A Year Round School District Moved From A Multi-Track To A Single Track Operation

Over 15 years experience with year-round schools in a K-12 program, new cost savings were discovered. Educational benefits as well as community attitudes were detailed, as well as the forces that led to the phase out of a multi-track system. The educational enhancements which were learned through intersession activities live on in a single track operation.

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Why A School District Went Off The Multi-Track Year–Round Calendar

One of the most rapidly growing innovations in education in America is the adoption of year-round calendars. At the annual conference of the National Association for Year–Round Education in San Diego, California, February 8 through 13, more than 2,500 educators spent a week studying the latest developments in the many schools implementing your-round programs. Twenty-three states now have year-round school programs and the number of students enrolled in these schools increased by 83% last year. Although Utah and California have the largest number of participating schools, the state of Florida has two counties that decided to put all their schools on the year-round schedule K through 8. Forty percent of the schools presently using year-round calendars have done so for the purpose of capturing educational benefits that can be gained in this new plan by delivering instruction to boys and girls during all four seasons of the year.

At the annual conference, one of the frequently asked questions was why Jefferson County Colorado went off the multi-track year-round program. This district had the largest year-round operation in the nation during the 1970's and the program developed there was used as a model for many districts in other states where year-round education is thriving today. Their 14 year experience with year-round scheduling suggested it was well established. When participants at the conference heard a description of all the events that occurred to lead up to the return of the last eleven year-round schools in the district to a modified nine month calendar in 1988, some educators and citizen participants were left confused and asked for more information.

Perhaps the reason this question is so hard to answer in a clear direct way, is that so many factors enter into a school district's decisions about its operating calendar. Among those who were most involved with scheduling the educational program in Jefferson County, you will find a half dozen different opinions as to what were the principle reason for a change. Eight years have passed since a decision was made and plans for discontinuance were set in motion in 1984, to place all the district's 112 schools on a modified but more conventional calendar.

Following are some of the primary reasons for the change which can now be viewed with the perspective of history.

Neighborhood School Concept

One opinion found that the growth of population in the district had produced whole communities where there were no schools. Growth occurred outwardly from the old population centers to the perimeter like the growth rings of a tree. In these new neighborhoods that ringed the district on the outer edges, there were whole communities that had the homes, streets, shopping centers, parks, recreation facilities, and churches of a complete community but there were no schools. Children from newly developed neighborhoods were bussed to the schools in older neighborhoods were the buildings could accommodate a fifty percent larger enrollment through year-round scheduling. In time, some parents wanted schools in their immediate neighborhood and they expressed a willingness to support an increase in the mil levy to build new schools close to their homes. At the same time, parents in the older communities who opposed bond issues before, joined in support of the campaign because they wanted to repair and remodel their schools. A broad range of citizens voted positively on the same large bond issue that built new schools and repaired old ones. The space created by the building program that followed was sufficient to put all pupils on a conventional calendar.

Temporary Housing Measure

Another opinion held that the policies of the Board of Education always maintained that year-round scheduling was a temporary housing alternative. The policy manual of the Board listed extended day scheduling, portable classrooms, cross-district bussing and year-round scheduling as the acceptable alternatives to be considered by administrators when enrollments exceeded the capacity of existing buildings. This manual also listed steps to be followed when enrollments declined or when new construction was authorized enabling year-round schools to revert to a more conventional calendar. The assumption made by the Boards of Education in the 1970's and 1980's was that year-round scheduling was always a temporary measure. In fact, in the orientation of parents in attendance areas where year-round scheduling was being considered, they were always assured that when funds could be made available for new construction the school in question would revert to a conventional calendar. There was no evidence in 1973 that year-round scheduling would become a better way to educate students or that the potential for cost savings other than for new construction would be worth consideration.

Administrative Factors

The continuous operation of schools for twelve months of the year creates more work for administrators at both the building level and in the central office. Managing instructional programs, providing supporting services, and responding to community needs is a constant work load 250 days of the year in a year-round program. There is never the easy down time during June, July and August which administrators have become accustomed to on a conventional calendar.

In Jefferson county, there were never more than thirty-seven schools on the year-round schedule at one time. This meant that the majority of the 112 schools in the district were on a nine-month schedule and followed a different pattern of deadlines, deliveries, and due dates. Central office staff always found this confusing and difficult to plan. After fourteen years the veteran year-round school principals said some of the central offices never did change over to accommodate twelve month operations and often left schools without support during the summer months. One assistant superintendent believed that the administrative burden for operating the educational program of a large district on a year-round schedule was too great to be continued indefinitely.

Gradual administrative burn-out eroded the support for the program at the top level, and as that minority of citizens who always oppose the loss of the long three month summer vacation brought forth their nagging complaints, these administrators began to move their concerns higher on the administrative agenda. Also as the membership of the Board of Education changed over 14 years, and new members replaced veterans, their knowledge of the merits of year-round education began to fade. Principals and central office staff, perceiving that the support of the Board was shifting from one of strong support to one of indifference, began to give more sympathy to the opposition. An organized opposition developed in only one high school attendance area. The citizens who joined this effort offered as a most compelling reason for this opposition, the fact that their high schools' test scores declined. No response by the administration was made to explain that the scores declined because the high school, which opened 12 years earlier with a small enrollment having the highest average intelligence scores in the district, had nearly tripled in enrollment since then. While on year-round scheduling, test score performance of pupils merely regressed to the mean of a larger and less academically elite pupil population. Administrators who were present did not care to explain this.

The Appeal of New Construction

The superintendency of a large school district usually turns over with regularity. In Jefferson County it has changed, on average, every six years since the district was organized in 1950.

Each time there has been a change, there has been a different thrust for administration, as it should be.

In 1984 the incumbent superintendent believed that the construction of new schools, with all the technolcgical advances they could bring, was a better choice for education in Jefferson County than the accommodation of pupils through year-round scheduling. He placed great emphasis upon bringing the advances in educational technology into every school. In order to construct all the new schools needed, it was necessary to insure tax payers that all communities would benefit from the school building improvement plan and all schools would conform to the same improvement standards. Going off the year-round schedule was never mentioned as an incentive to voters as the bond election was being planned. In fact, it was carefully avoided as an issue because there were those tax payers who regarded the year-round program as an economic measure that gave them extra value for their tax dollar. When a survey of community attitudes was done to determine the likelihood of passing a bond election in 1985, only 8% of the respondents stated they would vote for a new construction program to end year-round scheduling. The most frequently noted reasons for support were "education is important" — 32%; "need new schools" — 21%; and "reasonable price to pay"— 10%. The remainder of the 72% who favored new schools gave reasons supporting efforts to reduce overcrowding to meet needs of county growth. During the term of a previous superintendent in 1979, the property tax rate for the operating budget had actually been lowered, to return surplus revenue to the tax payers. At the same time the teacher's salary schedule became the highest in Colorado. The district experienced its most favorable financial circumstances in history during the first few years of the 1980's, when the number of year-round schools was greatest. The positive community attitude that resulted, created a good climate for passing a bond election.

Changing Board Priorities

The priorities of a Board of Education are reshaped from year to year as new members are elected and old members leave to pursue other interests. Year-round education became a priority of the Jefferson County Board in 1971 with the election of a dynamic new member who carried the merits of this innovation forward with remarkable vigor. In Colorado, there was never a state statute that required school districts to consider year-round operations when school buildings have enrollment exceeding their capacity. In states such as California and Utah the state legislatures have placed restrictions on the freedom of local districts to build new schools by forcing the administration of each over-enrolled school to consider all the housing alternatives before new construction can be authorized. Without this kind of state control, the continuation of year-round programs in an individual district or school is sustained only by the current attitude of the local administration and board at any point in time. After many years of operation, the year-round schedule became routine in Jefferson County and new Board

members brought with them other new priorities which consumed their energies. There were no additional studies of the educational benefits or economic advantages implicit in the program after its first pilot study. As a result, the board members in later years who authorized its discontinuance were not aware of the aggressive educational enhancements that are now incorporated in other districts into year-round operations, nor were they given the kind of operating cost analysis available in recent years to demonstrate increased costs incurred when new 9 month schools were opened to displace year-round schools. No figures were carried in the annual budget document to show costs avoided and costs reduced during the years of year-round school operation. The only figures shown were the operating cost increases necessary to extend the school year to twelve months. These costs were very conspicuous in the budget document and led persons studying the budget to believe that year-round schools were expensive and savings would be gained if they were discontinued.

Cost Savings Not Perceived

A year-round school is created when the enrollment is subdivided into attendance tracks which follow intermittent vacation patterns that release a portion of the membership each season over 12 continuous months of operation. Since this practice increases the building capacity of existing schools, new pupils in growth areas can be served, even though no school is built in their neighborhood.

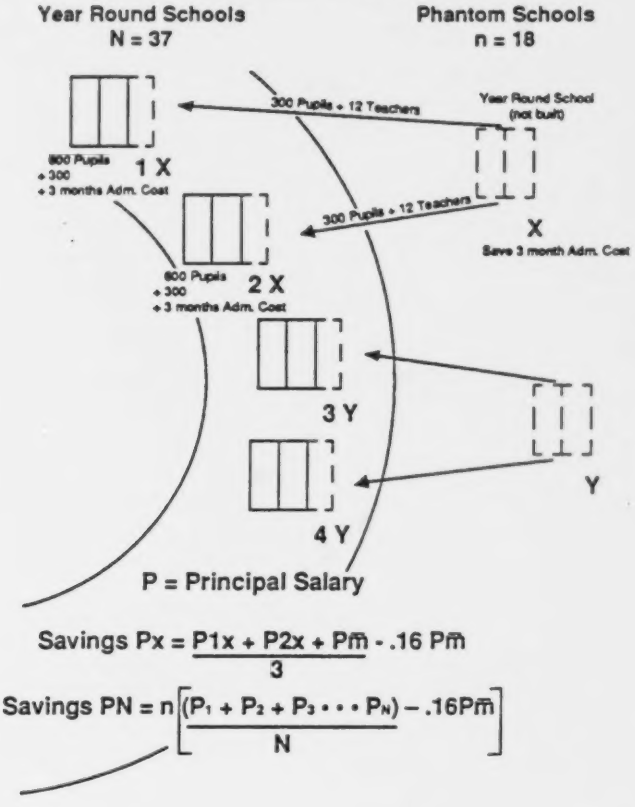
When a multi-track year-round program is implemented in a number of schools there is a savings generated in inverse proportion to the number of attendance tracks which divide the pupil membership. For each three schools operated on a four track program, a fourth school is gained free. In a three track program each two year-round schools produces a third school free. This free school or "phantom school" exists in the form of a pupil enrollment and faculty but it uses the building space and support services of existing schools on year-round schedules to educate boys and girls from a neighborhood without a school building.

It is easy to see the cost of the building is saved, but it is harder to understand how a large share of the administrative unit costs in the form of salaries for principals, secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, as well as busses, grounds and utilities are saved. When new schools were actually constructed and opened to displace the year-round operation, the operating costs far exceeded the costs for the same enrollment on the extended school year calendar. The enrollment in Jefferson County was not increasing during the time new nine-month schools were being built from 1985 to 1988, but for each high school opened on a nine-month calendar to accommodate a "phantom school" enrollment the operating cost increased one million dollars per annum. According to the superintendent at that time, proportional increases were incurred at the junior high level. Each elementary school operating cost increase was estimated to be $260,000 per annum. Had the full magnitude of these operating

cost increases been perceived by the citizens of Jefferson County, they might have viewed the year-round school program differently.

Table 1

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT COST SAVINGS – 1979



$$\text{Savings } Px = \frac{P1x + P2x + P\bar{m}}{3} - .16\,P\bar{m}$$

$$\text{Savings } PN = n\left[\frac{(P_1 + P_2 + P_3 \cdots P_N)}{N} - .16P\bar{m}\right]$$

If two adjacent year-round schools divide their membership into three tracks and release a third of their membership to vacations each term, they increase their capacity to house pupils of an additional hypothetical school. To do this, administrative unit costs must be added to the two year-round schools to cover the extra three months they are in operation. This accounts for six months of administrative cost for a group of students from the hypothetical or "phantom school". But the other three months of administrative cost which would be spent in a nine month school for this group of students is saved in a year-round school. This means that the administrative unit costs for principals, secretaries, cafeteria workers, custodians and bus drivers were reduced by one third for the group of pupils served by the increased year-round capacity.

To compute the savings in principal's salary use the following formula:

$$\text{Savings } Px = \frac{P1x + P2x + P\bar{m}}{3} - .16\,P\bar{m}$$

If P is the principal's salary and the two adjacent schools are 1x and 2x then Px is the savings in principal salary for pupils housed in the expanded capacity. Principals have a work year of 210 to 220 days. $P\bar{m}$ is the average principal's salary for the district and the amount spent to cover the principal's duties 12 month in the the two year-round schools is an additional 16%. If the average principal's salary were $55,000 the savings for all 37 year-round schools could be as much as $831,600 per annum. See Figure 1. Savings of this magnitude need to be displayed in the district's budget document along with the operating cost increases for the 12 month school year.

Educational Enhancements Not Realized

In states such as California and Utah where year-round education is growing rapidly, there are incentive funds to assist districts in making the change to the new calendar and for implementing an intersession program during the intermittent vacation periods. Through intersessions, districts have the capability of offering enrichment and remedial instruction to pupils that can produce a higher level of educational attainment for the total school membership when all the features of this concept are fully implemented. Students needing extra instruction can attend up to 60 more days without additional cost to the parents. Some school districts adopt a year-round schedule with their total enrollment on a single track for the sole purpose of obtaining educational benefits from intersessions and spaced learning terms. They make no attempt to save building space or administrative costs. They have observed that spaced learning terms cause pupils to be more engaged in their studies and the classroom atmosphere is more intent upon learning. In Colorado, there were never any extra state funds to help cover the costs of implementing year-round schools. The state legislature has maintained a distant attitude toward year-round schooling. As a result, the improvement of pupil achievement was never pursued as an objective of the year-round program in Jefferson County although there was an attempt by individual principals to squeeze some of these enhancements out of the teacher's work year voluntarily.

Uniform District–Wide Calendar

Perhaps the greatest impediment to implementation of the program was a special stipulation by the Board that all the schools within an attendance area had to have the same calendar. This meant that the high school was required to follow the same pattern of attendance as the

elementary schools and schools in the high school's feeder system that were not serving growing enrollments were required to implement the plan without incentives.

There is a difference between the educational models that work well in an elementary school and what works well in the high school. This is particularly true of the features of the master schedule which organizes the delivery of the curriculum, as the following analysis indicates:

FEATURES OF A SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Feature	Elementary School	High School
Pupil Groups	Yearlong Continuity	Change Each Period, Each Term
Faculty Access	Self-Contained Group	Individual Assignment
Curriculum Access	Self-Contained Class	Individual Choice
Sequence	Continuous Progress	Prerequisite courses
Electives	Few	Many

There are year-round schedules which can enhance instruction at each level, but the elementary models which have frequent short vacations and track each class group separately with the teacher, cause the high school great difficulty. Each student in a high school class of 30 may follow a daily schedule different from all the rest of the members of the class depending on his or her elective choices. High schools cannot give every student access to the total curriculum of the school unless the curriculum and student membership is rescheduled at the beginning of each term of attendance. Continuous progress models of curriculum and instruction, which the elementary school models require, are beyond the capability of most high schools to implement at the present time. It would require great expense to program each of the hundreds of courses offered in a high school so that each student progressed independently from all the rest. In addition, the high schools needed longer vacations and a plan that would increase their building capacity by 50% in order to take them off double sessions in very crowded schools. For this reason, the elementary schools in Jefferson County adopted a year-round calendar model that was designed for the high schools. The result was that elementary schools did not capture all the educational benefits that they expected from a year-round operation and the vacation patterns they were required to follow were not as desirable as they would have been if more frequent short vacations had been scheduled to include summer or vacations for everyone.

In the final analysis, however, the discussion of why Jefferson County went off the year-round program may no longer be of consequence. Growth in that district is on the rise again. Schools built in the last building campaign are far from adequate at this time and aggressive measures must be taken by a new Board and Superintendent to house the enrollments coming into these schools in the next year. Tax payers have defeated attempts to raise funds for new buildings

and general funds since year-round schools were discontinued. The district sent principals, Harry Morgan and Ron Horn, along with two teachers and two members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, to the Year–Round Education Conference in San Diego, February 10 through 13. Their purpose was to study the latest information that is available for the implementation of year-round scheduling. The district may have to use this knowledge in the very near future if proposals for the construction of new schools are not supported by citizens of the District in the next bond election.

Table 2

Addition of Services To Extend School Operations For One Year-Round School

Services Required 12 Months	Additional Services 3 summer months	Operating Cost Increase Per Annum
Special Teachers		33%
Media Specialists		33%
Food Services		30%
Delivery / Services		28%
Bus Transportation		28%
Secretaries / Clerks		20%
Administration		8%
Custodians		5%
Coaches / Directors		0%

Table 3

Cost of Reducing Two Year-Round Schools To Open One Nine Month School

Services Required Nine Months	Source of Cost: YRE Sch #1 3 months	YRE Sch #2 3 months	NEW School 3 months	Operating Cost Increase Per Annum
Special Teachers				33%
Media Specialists				33%
Food Services				39%
Delivery and Services				43%
Transportation				43%
Secretaries / Clerks				60%
Administrators				84%
Custodians				90%
Coaches / Directors				100%

Table 4

Jefferson County Schools
Transition From Year–Round to Nine Month Schools

Year–Round School	New School	Opened Year–Round	Opened Nine Month	Enrollment 1988–89
Colorow		1977	1987	755
Columbine		1977	1987	573
Dutch Creek		1977	1987	755
Leawood		1974	1987	664
Normandy		1974	1987	647
Shaffer		1980	1987	793
Stony Creek		1984	1987	748
	Coronado		1987	655
	Westridge		1987	738
	Ute Meadows		1987	820
	Governors Ranch		1987	519
Juchem		1977	1988	750
Parr		1974	1987	285
Little		1974	1988	458
	Adams		1988	564
Warder		1977	1988	522
Weber		1977	1988	707
Witt		1980	1988	757
Zerger		1977	1988	696
	Lukas		1988	706
Deer Crk. Jr. High		1982	1987	1038
Ken Caryl Jr. High		1977	1987	838
Columbine Sr. High		1977	1987	1691
	Chatfield Sr. High		1986	1774
Moore Jr. High		1980	1988	840
Mandalay Jr. High		1984	1988	615
Pomona Sr. High		1977	1988	1932
	Standley Lake Sr. High		1988	988

Table 5

Jefferson County Schools

Cost of Discontinuing Year-Round Schools

Construction Costs

Bonded Indebtedness — (eight new schools)	$ 87,700,000
Capital Reserve For New Construction	20,000,000

Operating Cost Increase Per Annum

	1986–87	1987–88	1988–89	
Six Elementary Schools		1,040,000	1,560,000	
Two High Schools	1,000,000	1,000,000	2,000,000	
				$ 6,600,000

Flat Grants To New Schools

Instructional Supply (six elementary schools)	$ 180,000
Instructional Supply (two high schools)	$ 100,000
Phase–In Costs (eight schools)	$ 1,600,000
Total Cost Through Sept. 1989	$116,180,000

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Preserving the Neighborhood School Concept**

Board policy should outline the optimum school size to be maintained in the district at every level. When year-round schools are over enrolled, or students must be transported unreasonable distances, the policy should authorize the mechanism for validating the need and scope of new construction to serve each new neighborhood.

2. **Temporary Housing Measure**

Year-round education should not be viewed as a temporary housing alternative. Short term intentions produce diminished outcomes. Districts should consider it for the purpose of educating students better. When it is viewed as temporary, no effort is made to improve from year to year beyond the initial implementation stage and opposition always builds upon each new mistake.

3. **Administrative Factors**

Administrators assigned to year-round schools should be chosen for their knowledge and commitment to implement successfully this kind of very complex program. A salary incentive should be paid principals commensurate with their increased responsibilities.

4. **The Appeal of New Construction**

Boards of Education should select superintendents who have an understanding of, and commitment for, the successful implementation of year-round programs. It is the way of the future of education in America and the cost benefits are too great to be overlooked. Construction of new buildings should not be viewed as a measure of success in administration.

5. **Changing Board Priorities**

The Board should establish objectives it will want to achieve through the implementation of year-round schools. Districts should designate an administrator who reports to the superintendent who has responsibility for achieving these objectives and keeping the superintendent and Board informed. Annual evaluations of financial and educational achievements should be made along with a survey of community attitude toward year-round programs in progress. Attitude studies should be based on the objectives of the

year-round program and special interest groups should not become the spokespersons for community opinion.

6. Cost Savings Not Perceived

Cost studies should be done regularly to determine cost increases in year-round programs of the district as well as costs avoided, reduced or deferred. The costs and savings should be displayed in the budget document when annual budgets are prepared and presented for Board approval. The optimum school sizes approved by the Board should be used as the basis for determining costs saved per school enrollment. Since cost benefits are achieved through the avoidance of new construction, savings should be displayed in terms of cost avoided or deferred for each real or hypothetical administrative unit.

7. Educational Enhancements Not Realized

Year-round education requires the establishment of educational enhancements including remedial and enrichment intersessions. No program should be implemented without the funding to initiate them either by reallocation of savings, tuition or sources of revenue outside the district. To insure that students receive more than a minimum education high schools should also be required to implement fifth quarter and cooperative work and service programs during vacations in year-round schools.

8. Uniform District–Wide Calendar

In implementing year-round programs, the calendar that serves the elementary schools best is not the same as the calendar that serves the high school best. There is no one calendar that is ideal for all schools. There are, however, several calendar choices which can provide compatible vacation patterns for elementary and high school students within the same attendance area. Calendar committees should always have representation from both elementary and secondary levels and consider their needs together when a year-round calendar is chosen.

9. Educational Evaluations

When comparison studies of educational achievement between year-round and nine-month schools are done procedural and statistical methods of controlling for variances between different school populations must be employed. Matched samples might need to be used unless there is sufficient pre and post performance data on individual pupils to do a longitudinal study. Longitudinal studies using total group performance are not valid.